

TO THE RAW ONES

Dr. Talmage's Sermon at the
Tabernacle.

DARKNESS MUST BE ASSAULTED

A Man Cannot Become a Christian With
out an Effort or Conquer Tempta-
tion Without a Struggle.

BROOKLYN, June 12.—Dr. Talmage prefaced his sermon this morning with a statement to the effect that he would sail on Wednesday next for Europe and might be able to be present at the distribution of the famine stricken districts of Russia of The Christian Herald relief cargo, consisting of three million pounds of flour and other supplies, which goes out this week on the steamship Leo, chartered for the purpose. He congratulated the American people on the generous spirit evinced by this magnificent gift to the starving people. His sermon was from the text, Ephesians vi, 11, "Put on the whole armor of God."

There is in this text a great rattle of shields and helmets and swords. "Soldiers are getting ready for battle. We have had recently in this church new enlistments, and I shall address myself to them in this and other churches who are putting on the armor of God, and who may feel themselves to be as yet only raw recruits. "Masterly retreat" is a term often used in military circles, but in religion there is no such thing. It is either glorious advance or disgraceful and ignominious falling back. It would be a strange thing if all our anxiety about men ceased the moment they were converted.

You would almost doubt the sanity of that farmer who, having planted the corn and seen it just sprout above ground, should say: "My work is all done. I have no more anxiety for the field." No. There is work for the plow and the hoe, and there must be a careful keeping up of the fences, and there must be a frightening away of the birds that would pillage the field. And I say the entrance upon Christian life is only the implantation of grace in the heart. There is earnest, hard work yet to be done and perhaps many years of anxiety before there shall be heard the glorious shout of "Harvest home."

The beginning to be a Christian is only putting down the foundation; but after that there are years of hammering, polishing, carving, lifting, before the structure is completed. It takes five years to make a Christian character; it takes twenty years, it takes forty years, it takes seventy years, if a man shall live so long. In other words, a man dying after half a century of Christian experience feels that he has only learned the "A B C's" of a glorious alphabet. The next year will decide a great deal in your history, young Christian man. It will decide whether you are to be a burning and shining light of the church, or a spark of grace covered up in a barrel of ashes. It will decide whether you are to be a strong man in Christ Jesus, with gigantic blows striking the iron mail of darkness, or a bedwetter, whining, grumbling soldier, that ought to be drummed out of the Lord's camp with the "Rogue's March." You have only just been launched; the voyage is to be made. Earth and heaven and hell are watching to see how fast you will sail, how well you will weather the tempest, and whether at last, amid the shouting of angels, you shall come into the right harbor. May God help me this morning to give you three or four words of Christian counsel, as I address myself more especially to those who have just now entered the Christian life.

HOLD CHRIST AS A PATTERN.
My first word of counsel is, hold before your soul a very high model. Do not say, "I wish I could pray like that man, or speak like this man, or have the consecration of this one." Say: "Here is the Lord Jesus Christ, a perfect pattern. By that I mean, with God's grace, to shape all my life." In other words, you will never be any more a Christian than you strive to be. If you build a foundation twenty by thirty feet you will only have a small house. If you build a foundation one hundred by one hundred feet you will have a large house. If you resolve to be only a middling Christian you will only be a middling Christian. If you have no high aspiration in a worldly direction you will never succeed in business. If you have no high aspiration in religious things you will never succeed in religion.

You have a right to aspire to the very highest style of Christian character. From your feet there reaches out a path of Christian attainment which you may take, and I deliberately say that you may be a better man than was Paul or David or Samuel or Dorrance—a better woman than Hannah or Charlotte Elizabeth. Why not? Did they have a monopoly of Christian grace? Did they have a private key to the storehouse of God's mercy? Does God shut you out from the gladness and goodness to which they were introduced? Oh, no. You have just the same promises, just the same Christ, just the same Holy Ghost, just the same offer of present and everlasting love, and if you fall short of what they were—aye, if you do not come up to the point which they reached and go beyond it—it is not because Christ has shut you out from any point of moral and spiritual elevation, but because you deliberately refused to take it. I admit that man cannot become a Christian like that without a struggle; but what do you get without fighting for it? The fortresses of darkness are to be taken by storm. You may by acute strategy flank the hosts of temptation, but there are temptations, there are evils in the way that you will have to meet face to face, and it will be shot for shot, gun for gun, grip for grip, slaughter for slaughter. The apostle Paul over and over again represents the Christian life as a combat.

When the war vessel of Christ's church comes into bay bringing its crew and its passengers it will not come in like a North river yacht, beautifully painted and sleek, sailing on a pleasant excursion. Oh, no; it will be like a vessel coming with a heavy cargo from China or India, the masts of the waves and the hurricane upon it—sails rent, rigging spiced, pumps all working to keep her afloat, bulwarks knocked away. I see such a vessel coming and get out my small boat and push toward her, and I shout: "Aho, captain! What are you doing

to do with those shivered timbers? That was a beautiful ship when you went out, but you have ruined it." "Oh," says the captain, "I have a fine cargo on board, and by this round trip I have made ten fortunes."

So I believe it will be when the Christian soul at last comes into the harbor of heaven. It will come bearing upon it the marks of a great stress of weather. You can see by the very looks of that soul as it comes into glory that it was driven by a storm and dashed in the hurricane, but by so much as the voyage is rough, will the harbor be blessed. "If ye suffered with him on earth, ye shall be glorified with him in heaven." Aim high. Do not be satisfied to be like the Christians all around you. Be more than they have ever been for Christ.

An old Arabian king was showing a beautiful sword that had been given him, when one of his courtiers said: "This sword is too short. You cannot do anything with it." Said the king's son: "To a brave man no sword is too short. If it be too short, take one step in advance, and then it is long enough." So I say to any Christian who may feel that he has poor weapons with which to fight against sin and darkness and death: "Advance upon the enemy. In the strength of Christ go forward. God is for you, and if God be for you, who can be against you? Remember that God never puts you in battle, but he gives you weapons with which to fight."

POWER OF CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.
My second word of counsel to those who have recently entered upon Christian life is, abstain from all pernicious associations, and take only those that are useful and beneficent. Stay out of all associations that would damage your Christian character. Take only those associations that will help you. A learned man said, "If I stay with that man Fenelon any longer, I shall get to be a Christian in spite of myself." In other words there is a mighty power in Christian associations. Now what kind of associations shall we, as young Christians, seek after? I think we ought to get into company better than ourselves, never going into company worse than ourselves. If we get into company a little better than ourselves and there are ten people in that company, ten chances to one we will be bettered. If we get into company a little worse than ourselves, and there are ten people in that company, ten chances to one we will be made worse than we were before.

Now, when a young Christian enters the church, God does not ask him to retire from the world. The anchorite that lives on acorns is no nearer heaven than the man who lives on partridge and wild duck. Isolation is not demanded by the Bible. A man may use the world with the restriction of not abusing it. But just as soon as you find any surroundings pernicious to your spiritual interest, quit those associations. This remark is more especially appropriate to the young. Now it is impossible that the young and untrodden should seek their associations with those who are aged and worn out. As God intended the aged to associate with the aged, talking over the past and walking staff in hand along the same paths they trod thirty, forty and fifty years ago, so I suppose he intended the young chiefly to associate with the young. The grace of God does not demand that we be unnatural. I do not want you to take this caution I have given you as that of a growing misanthrope, hating hilarity. For you must have a spring bow if you want to make the arrow fly. But while this is so, I want you to be especially on guard in this matter, and let the religion of Jesus Christ control you in all your associations. I know young people who have meant well enough, but they have floated off into evil influences, and they have associated day by day with those who hated God and despised his commandments, and their characters are all depleted. I can see they are changed for the worse, but they are not aware of it. Oh, young man, come out of that bad association. I do not know what it is. I do not know to what place you may have a private key. I do not know to what place you go without the sanction of those who love you very much.

I do not pretend to point out any evil influences, but there are not some surrounding influences that are pernicious to your growth in grace! Stand back from that furnace in which so many young Christians have been destroyed. In this church there is a large company of young men and young women consecrated to Christ. I know of no better than they are.

Young convert, I invite you into their friendship. Contact with them will elevate you. All hail, young followers of Jesus Christ, my joy and my pride! My heart thrills at every step of your advancement. I talked with you in that hour when you most tried to break from sin, and I now rejoice as I see you putting on the armor of a conflict in which God will give you present and everlasting victory. Stand off from all evil associations. A man is no better than the company he keeps. Go among those who are better than you are, and you will be made better. Go among those who are worse than you are and you will be made worse.

BE BRIGHT AND CHEERFUL.
My next word of counsel is that you be actively employed. I see a great many Christians with doubts and perplexities, and they seem to be proud of them. Their entire Christian life is made up of gloom, and they seem to cultivate that spiritual dependency, when I will undertake to say that in nine cases out of ten spiritual dependency is a judgment of God upon idleness. Who are the happy people in the church today? The busy people. Show me a man who professes the religion of Jesus Christ and is idle, and I will show you an unhappy man. The very first prescription that I give to a man when I find him full of doubts and fears about his eternal interest is to go to work for God. Ten thousand voices are lifted up asking for your help. Go and help.

Here is a wood full of summer insects. An axman goes into the wood to cut firewood. The insects do not bother him very much, and every stroke of the ax makes them fly away. But let a man go and lie down there, and he is bitten and stung, and thinks it is a horrible thing to stay in the wood. Why does he not take an ax and go to work? So there are thousands of Christians now in the church who go out amid great annoyances in life—they are not perished, they are all the time busy; while there are others who do nothing, and they are stung and stung and stung and covered from head to foot with the blotches of idleness and inactivity, and spiritual death.

The first thing, then, you have to do, O Christian young man, Christian young woman, is to go to work in the service of the Lord, if you want to be a happy Christian. When an army goes out, there are always stragglers falling off here and there, some because they are faint and sick, but a great many because they are afraid to fight and too lazy to march. After a while the lazy men on the road hear the booming of the guns for hours, and they hear the shout of victory, and a man on horseback comes up and says, "We have won the day!" Then they hasten up. How brave they are after the battle is over. Poor at fighting, but grand at "huzzas." So there are stragglers going after the Lord's host. There come days of darkness and battle. Where are they? We call the roll of the host. They make no answer, but after a while there comes a day of triumph in the church, and they are all about. "Huzzah! huzzah! Didn't we give it to them?"

PRAYER A GREAT STRENGTHENER.
I have another word of counsel to give those who have just entered Christian life, and that is, be faithful in prayer. You might as well, business man, start out in the morning without food and expect to be strong all that day—you might as well abstain from food all the week and expect to be strong physically, as to be strong without prayer. The only way to get any strength into the soul is by prayer, and the only difference between that Christian that is worth everything and that who is worth nothing is the fact that the last does not pray and the other does.

And the only difference between this Christian, who is getting along very fast in the holy life, and this, who is only getting along tolerably, is that the first prays more than the last. You can graduate a man's progress in religion by the amount of prayer; not by the number of hours, perhaps, but by the earnest supplication that he puts up to God. There is no exception to the rule. Show me a Christian man who neglects this kind of duty, and I will show you one who is inconsistent. Show me a man who prays, and his strength and his power cannot be exaggerated. Why, just give to a man this power of prayer and you give him almost omnipotence.

This afternoon you will see two Sabbath school teachers. That one does not gain the attention of her class. This one does. What is the difference between them, their intellects being about equal? The first thought only of her own apparel. The other came from great preparation before God in earnest supplication, asking that God's mercy might come upon the school and that in the afternoon she might gain the attention of those five or six immortals that would be around her. The one teacher has no control over her class. The other sits as with the strength of the Lord God Almighty.

A minister comes into the pulpit. He has a magnificent sermon, all the sentences rounded according to the laws of rhetoric and fine sermonizing, and the truth makes no impression on the hearts of men. People go away and say, "Very beautiful, wasn't it?" A plain man comes into the pulpit. He has been on his knees before God asking for an especial message that day, and the hearts of men open to the plain truth, the broken sentences strike into their consciences, and though the people may disperse at the close of the services seemingly without having received any impression, that night ruins will be lifted in some household. "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" Oh, this power of prayer! Pray! Pray!

DRINK OF THE WATER OF KNOWLEDGE.
Another word of counsel I have to give. Be faithful in Bible research. A great many good books are now coming out. We cannot read half of them. At every revolution of the printing press they are coming. They cover our parlor tables, and are in our sitting rooms and libraries. Glorious books they are. We thank God every day for the work of the Christian printing press. But I have thought that perhaps the followers of Christ sometimes allow this religious literature to take their attention from God's Word, and that there may not be as much Bible reading as there ought to be.

How is that with your own experience? Just calculate in your minds how much religious literature you have read during the year and then how large a portion of the Word of God you have read, and then contrast the two and answer within your own soul whether you are giving more attention to the books that were written by the hand of man or that written by the hand of God. Now, you go to the drug store and you get the mineral waters, but you have noticed that the waters are not so fresh or sparkling or healthful as when you get these very waters at Saratoga and Sharon—getting them right where they bubble from the rock.

And I have noticed the same thing in regard to the truth of the Gospel; while there is a good deal of refreshment and health of the Gospel of God as it comes through good books, I find it is better when I come to the eternal rock of God's Word and drink from that fountain that bubbles up fresh and pure to the life and the refreshment and the health of the soul.

Read the Bible and it brings you into the association of the best people that ever lived. You stand beside Moses and learn his meekness, beside Job and learn his patience, beside Paul and catch something of his enthusiasm, beside Christ and you feel his love. And yet how strange it is that a great many men have given their whole lives to the assaulting of that book. I cannot understand it. Tom Paine worked against that book as though he received large wages and was inspired by the very powers of darkness, confessing that all the time he was writing he did not have the Bible anywhere near him. How many powerful intellects have endeavored to destroy it. Hume, Bolingbroke, Voltaire have been after it. Ten thousand men now are warring against the truth of God's Word. What do you think of them? I think it is mean and will prove it. I will prove it is the meanest thing that has ever been done in all the centuries.

There is a ship at sea and in trouble. The captain and the crew are at their wits' end. You are on board. You are an old seaman. You come up and give some good counsel, which is kindly taken. That is all right. But suppose, instead of doing that, in the midst of all the trouble you pick up the only compass that is on board and pitch it over the board. Oh, you say, that is dastardly. But is it as mean as this? Here is the vessel of the world going on with sixteen hundred millions of passengers, and

and driven in the tempest, and at the time we want help the infidel comes and he takes hold of the only compass and he tries to pitch it overboard. It is contemptible beyond everything that is contemptible. Have you any better light? Bring it on if you have. Have you any better comfort to give us? Bring it on if you have. Have you any better hope? Bring it on if you have, and then you may have this Bible and I shall never want it again.

LEAN ON THE STAFF OF THE GOSPEL.
But I can think of a meaner thing than that, and that is an old man going along on the mountains with a staff in one hand and a lantern in the other. Darkness has come on suddenly. He is very old, just able to pick his way out amid the rocks and precipices, leaning on his staff with one hand and guiding himself with the light in the other. You come up and say: "Father, you seem to be lost. You are a long way from home." "Yes," he replies. And then you take him by the hand and lead him home. That is very kind of you. But suppose instead of that you should snatch the staff from his hands and hurl it over the rocks, and snatch the lantern and blow it out? That would be dastardly, contemptible until there is no depth of contempt beneath it. If you have a better staff, give it to him. If you have a better light, give it to him.

When God has put the staff of the Gospel in our hands and the lamp of God's Word to light our feet, are you going to take from us our only support and our only illumination? I love the sting of the wasp and the rattlesnake better than I do the man who wants to clutch the Word of God from my grasp. There are people here who have been reading it a good while. It is a precious book to their souls. It has been so in times of darkness and trouble. There was a soldier who fell in battle, and after he had fallen he said in a feeble voice to his comrade, "Give me a drop." His comrade replied, "There is not a particle of water in my canteen." "Oh," he said, "I didn't mean that. Look in my knapsack and you will find a Bible there. Get out that old Bible and just give me a drop out of that." And his comrade found the Bible and read a few passages. The dying soldier said, "Oh, George, there is nothing like that, is there, for a dying soldier?"

Cling to your Bible! If this Bible should be destroyed, if all the Bibles that have ever been printed should be destroyed, we could make up a Bible right out of this audience. From that Christian man's experience I take one cluster of promises, and from that old Christian man's experience another, I put them all together, and I think I would have a Bible.

You see, my friends, I have not tried to hide the fact that I have large expectations of you who have entered the Christian life. Do not be discouraged. Press on toward the prize; God beside you and heaven before you. Keep your courage up." Look in thirty years from now upon this church. Another man in the pulpit. Other faces in the pews. Another man leading the song. Others carrying around the alms boxes of the church. All changed. Thirty years have gone and I look into the faces of the people, and I say: "Why, it seems to me I have seen these people somewhere, but I cannot exactly say where. Oh, yes, now I begin to think. These were the converts in 1892 and 1890. Why, how you have changed!"

"Oh, yes," they say, "of course we have changed. Thirty years makes a great change." I say, "How many wrinkles there are in your faces!" "Oh, yes," they say, "thirty years make a great many wrinkles." "Have you kept the faith?" "Yes, we have kept the faith." "Where are those people who used to sit in the pew with you?" "All gone." Then I say, "Well, I feel lonely; come, let us sing one of the old hymns we used to sing thirty years ago, in 1892, on communion day. Any of you know the old tune? Some one hum it. Yes, that's it, that's it. Now, altogether, let us sing, just as we did in 1892:

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Drawn from Immanuel's vein;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
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